



Z-08-12-004

**City of Greensboro Planning Department  
Zoning Staff Report and Plan Amendment Evaluation**

**Zoning Commission Hearing Date: January 12, 2009**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**APPLICANT**

Stanhope Johnson for Cornwallis Elm, LLC

**HEARING TYPE**

Zoning Commission

**REQUEST**

**RS-12** (Residential-Single Family) to  
**CD-LO** (Conditional District-Limited Office)

**CONDITIONS**

1. Uses: Limited to all uses permitted in the Business Professional and Personal Service category of the Limited Office Zoning District.
2. The subject property will be designed and developed in a unified manner and will incorporate similar and complimentary architectural features such as masonry and stucco materials.
3. Buildings will be limited to two stories above ground.
4. Site lighting will be designed in a manner as to eliminate direct illumination onto adjacent properties.
5. The development will be designed to allow for internal vehicular and pedestrian connectivity between any freestanding buildings within the development. Vehicular connectivity will be accommodated by shared driveways and cross connections. Pedestrian connectivity will be accommodated by provision of sidewalks and painted crosswalks internally within the property.
6. Digital signage is not permitted.
7. Buffer areas per site sketch plan submitted with the rezoning application and dated 10/31/2008.

**LOCATION**

2207 North Elm Street, 2209 North Elm Street, 106 West Cornwallis Drive and 108 West Cornwallis Drive (North of West Cornwallis Drive and west of North Elm Street)

<b>PARCEL ID NUMBER (S)</b>	00-00-0-2860-00-0100-004/005 and 00-00-0-2860-00-0100-023/022
<b>PUBLIC NOTIFICATION</b>	The notification area for this public hearing was 600 feet (Chapter 30-9-1.2 of the City Ordinance requires notification of the owner of that parcel of land and the owners of all parcels of land adjoining and contiguous to that parcel of land as shown on the County tax listing). <b>115</b> notices were mailed to those property owners in the mailing area.
<b>TRACT SIZE</b>	2.66 acres
<b>TOPOGRAPHY</b>	Slopes to the west
<b>VEGETATION</b>	Residential landscaping

**SITE DATA**

<b>Existing Use</b>	2 single-family dwellings	
	<b>Adjacent Zoning</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Uses</b>
N	RS-12 (Residential- Single Family)	Single-Family dwelling unit
E	CD-LB (Conditional District-Limited Business) and GO-M (General Office-Moderate Intensity)	Regions Financial Center and Saint Pius School and Church
W	RS-12 (Residential- Single Family)	Single-Family dwelling unit
S	RS-12 (Residential- Single Family)	Single-Family dwelling units

**Zoning History**

Case #	Date	Request Summary
		This property has been zoned RS-12 since July 1, 1992. Prior to the implementation of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), it was zoned RES 90 S

**ZONING DISTRICT STANDARDS****District Summary \***

Zoning District Designation:	Existing (RS-12)	Requested (CD-LO)
Max. Density:	3 dwelling units/acre	N/A
Typical Uses	Primarily intended to accommodate moderate density single-family detached dwellings in developments where public water and sewer service is required.	Primarily intended to accommodate low intensity medical, professional, administrative, and government office uses on small to mid-sized sites near residential areas.

\*These regulations may not reflect the actual requirements for all situations; see the City of Greensboro Zoning Code for actual regulations for site requirements for this zoning district.

**SPECIAL INFORMATION****Overlay District Ordinance/Historic Preservation – N/A****Environmental/Soils**

Water Supply Watershed	N/A, Site drains to North Buffalo Creek
Floodplains	Site is not in a regulated floodplain. City ordinance requires on all perennial and intermittent streams a non encroachment area on each side of the stream (30' or 5 times the width of the channel) measured from centerline of the stream. 100 yr base flood elevation must be obtained.
Streams	Blue line streams and any other perennial streams require a 50' buffer measured from (whichever produces a greater buffer) top of bank, top of steep slope or edge of contiguous wetland. The first 15' must remain undisturbed, next 35' built upon area of 50% and no occupied structures are allowed.
Other:	Possibility of wetlands. Any wetland disturbance and or stream crossing disturbance must be permitted by the State and the Corps of Engineers prior to any disturbance.

**Utilities**

Potable Water  
Waste Water

**Airport Noise Cone**

The subject property is not located in the Airport Noise Cone.

**Landscaping Requirements**

Location	Required Planting Yard Type and Rate
North	Type B Yard – avg. width 30'; 3 canopy trees per 100'; 5 understory trees per 100'; 25 shrubs per 100'
South	Street Yard - minimum width 8'; 2 canopy tree per 100', 17 shrubs per 100' AND Type D Yard – minimum width 5'; 2 understory trees per 100'; 18 shrubs per 100'
East	Street Yard - minimum width 8'; 2 canopy tree per 100', 17 shrubs per 100' AND Type D Yard – minimum width 5'; 2 understory trees per 100'; 18 shrubs per 100'
West	Type B Yard – avg. width 30'; 3 canopy trees per 100'; 5 understory trees per 100'; 25 shrubs per 100'

**Tree Preservation Requirements**

Acreage	Requirements
2.66 Ac.	All trees 4" or greater DBH which are located within the required planting yards

**Transportation**

Street Classification	Elm Street – Major Thoroughfare, Cornwallis Drive – Minor Thoroughfare.
Site Access	All access(s) must be designed and constructed to the City of Greensboro standards.
Traffic Counts:	Elm Street ADT = 17,861, Cornwallis Drive ADT = 10,978.
Trip Generation:	24 Hour = 3,290, AM Peak Hour = 156, PM Peak Hour = 408.
Sidewalks	Sidewalks are a requirement of the Development Ordinance. 5' sidewalk with a 5' grass strip is required along both sides of thoroughfares. 5' sidewalk with a 3' grass strip is required along one side (at a minimum, collectors may require sidewalk on both sides) of all other street types. There is no existing sidewalk along the frontage of this development.
Transit in Vicinity	Yes, route 3, N. Elm Street.
Traffic Impact Study (TIS)	Yes, required per TIS Ordinance. Please see the end of this staff report for the Executive Summary to the TIS.
Street Connectivity	N/A.
Other	N/A.

**IMPACT ANALYSIS****Land Use Compatibility**

The proposed **CD-LO** (Conditional District-Limited Office) zoning would allow land uses that are incompatible with the general character of the area.

**Connections 2025 Comprehensive Plan Policies**

The Generalized Future Land Use Map designates this location as **Low Residential and Mixed Use Commercial**. The requested **CD-LO** zoning district is consistent with these GFLUM designations as Limited Office is considered a compatible use within Low Residential and Mixed Use Commercial designations.

**Connections 2025 Written Policies**

Reinvestment/Infill Goal: Promote sound investment in Greensboro's urban areas, including Center City, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods.

POLICY 4C: Promote new patterns and intensities of use to increase economic competitiveness and enhance quality of life in urban areas.

Man-made Environment Goal: Preserve and enhance the character and visual quality of Greensboro's built environment, including historic resources, private developments, and public landscapes.

POLICY 5D: Preserve and promote Greensboro's historic resources and heritage.

POLICY 5F.2: Improve design standards for new development to enhance community appearance and sense of place (visual impacts on adjacent neighborhoods).

Economic Development Goal: Promote a healthy, diversified economy with a strong tax base and opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and for-profit and non-profit economic development for all segments of the community, including under-served areas such as East Greensboro.

**Connections 2025 Map Policies**

Low Residential (3-5 d.u./acre): This category includes the City's predominantly single-family neighborhoods as well as other compatible housing types that can be accommodated within this density range. Although there are some existing residential areas in the City developed on lots greater than 1/3 acre, future residential developments and "conventional" subdivisions should generally maintain a gross density of no less than three dwellings per acre, except where environmental constraints (e.g., the Watershed Critical Area) prevent such densities from being achieved. Compact developments that include clustered, small lots with substantial retained open space are encouraged.

Mixed Use Commercial: This designation is intended to promote a mix of uses, of which various commercial uses remain predominant, but where residential, service, and other uses are complementary. Where applied to older highway corridors characterized by "strip" commercial uses, the intent is to encourage infill and redevelopment for a more diverse and attractive mix of uses over time. Examples include residential units over commercial uses or a wider array of economically viable uses to replace obsolete uses. Such areas also may represent opportunities for the introduction of substantial higher density and/or mixed-income housing, with negligible impacts on, or resistance from, nearby single-family neighborhoods. Ensuring that buildings are of the appropriate scale and intensity is critical, as is ensuring that sites are designed in a coordinated, as opposed to a lot-by-lot, manner. New "strip" commercial development is discouraged.

**CONFORMITY WITH OTHER PLANS****City Plans – N/A****Other Plans - N/A****Staff/Agency Comments****Planning**

Staff is concerned that this proposal will destabilize the long-existing residential neighborhood which fronts on both sides of W. Cornwallis and N. Elm and continues toward the north, south and west of the applicant properties. If approved, it will put pressure on surrounding properties and encourage additional non-residential developments along neighborhood gateways or further into the neighborhood.

The majority of the site is designated as Low Residential in the Comprehensive Plan and while office uses are generally considered compatible in that designation, new development should be compatible with existing developments and not negatively impact stable residential areas. The extension of office development beyond the commercial node located at the intersection of N. Elm and W. Cornwallis will continue intense development patterns into an existing, stable single family neighborhood. Residential development or small-scale, complementary office development that provides a transition between the solid commercial and established residential areas appears to be a better fit as would office or commercial development that is appropriate in scale with the existing single family development patterns.

Further, the site contains a significant historic resource to the Greensboro community with the 1958 UNCG Commencement House located at 2207 N. Elm. The proposed site plan offers demolishing the existing single family residential structures on N. Elm and W. Cornwallis to accommodate two medical offices and associated parking. The property located at 2207 N. Elm is the product of a 1958 collaboration among 23 students at the Women's College (now UNCG), noted Greensboro architect Edward Lowenstein and artist Gregory Ivy. Offered as an art and home economics class, the students designed the house, oversaw its construction and decorated the structure dubbed the "Commencement House" by the university's public relations office. Acclaim for the structure came from local and national sources including the *Greensboro Daily News*, WUNC-TV, *McCall's Magazine*, and *Southern Appliances Magazine*. The 1958 Commencement House is one of three such Commencement Houses in Greensboro, the others being constructed in 1959 and 1965.

Staff feels that small-scale offices designed to be in context with the surrounding single family developments could act as a transition between the commercial node at the intersection and the neighborhood as could retaining and rehabilitating the historically significant structure at 2207 N Elm.

Staff has been working diligently with the applicants to come up with conditions and design elements that will help alleviate some of staff's concerns. In line with Comprehensive Plan Policy **(5F.2)**, which encourages the improvement of design standards for new development to enhance community appearance and sense of place (visual impacts on adjacent neighborhoods), suggested design elements and conditions

include, but are not limited to:

1. Retaining and rehabilitating the residential building located at 2207 N. Elm Street for adaptive reuse.
2. All new development shall have similar scale and massing as adjacent residential properties.
3. Street facing facades shall be modulated with projections or recessions of at least 3 feet in depth once every 45 feet.
4. Height shall be limited to 40 feet above grade.
5. The front façade of any principal buildings on site shall be oriented towards either W. Cornwallis Drive or N. Elm Street and shall include a building entry fronting the street.

Staff would be comfortable recommending approval of this proposal if the above suggested conditions are added to the request. At this moment, and without these additional conditions, staff believes that the uses in the requested CD-LO zoning district are not consistent with the general character of the surrounding area.

#### **DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE 30-DAY CONTINUANCE WAS GRANTED**

Staff continued to work diligently with the applicants to come out with design elements that will make the proposed project blend in harmoniously with the existing single-family neighborhood. As at the time of writing this staff report, the applicant has proposed in good faith, the following amendments and additions to the conditions:

1. Limit building height to 42 feet.
2. Building facades facing street shall be modulated with projections or recessions of at least three (3) feet every 45 feet.
3. Building to have entrance appearance with entry and/or egress doors facing street.
4. The structure at 2207 N. Elm Street to be available on its own lot for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.
5. Not allow future access or shared parking with adjacent residential properties.

The applicant has demonstrated good faith by modifying and proposing new conditions. However staff still has some reservations about the proposed project as follows:

1. Condition # 4 relating to preserving the Commencement House needs revision to include wording such as “the original building will remain in place **and be rehabilitated.**” In our view, this would be a more affirmative commitment to preserving this important structure than to say that it would be “available” for rehabilitation.
2. Secondly, Staff is very concerned about the need for additional changes to the façade for the proposed office building facing Cornwallis and the need to make it compatible with both the nearby residences and office building. The elevations we have on file at this time fit with the adjoining office building but not so much with nearby residences. In light of this, staff is suggesting the following or similar wording to that effect:
  - Include a functional exterior door/entryway to the building façade facing Cornwallis.
  - To strengthen pedestrian connections, include a sidewalk directly from this entryway to the sidewalk along Cornwallis, similar to other nearby

residences & buildings.

- To make the buildings a good transition to nearby residences. It is suggested that the applicant consider using more of a residential style roof type on the façade. For example, including a larger slanted roof extending down to the top of the first floor, possibly including dormers, could assist in compatibility with adjoining residences.

Staff still believes that this request, as submitted, is not consistent with the intent and purpose of the zoning code. Staff is also of the opinion that the request, as submitted, is incompatible with the existing development in the surrounding neighborhood. However staff believes that a good transition design can be achieved if the aforementioned suggestions are adhered to. Until the above outstanding concerns are resolved, staff believes that this project is not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

### **Water Resources**

The City of Greensboro must adopt and implement the State minimum requirements for the Phase II NPDES post-construction requirements by June 1, 2009. New and revised ordinance language will be adopted to comply with the new regulations, if plan is not submitted before June 1, 2009 site must meet Phase II requirements.

### **Housing and Community Development**

This proposed rezoning and development consists of demolishing four existing single family homes in sound condition, in order to construct several multi-story office buildings. This proposal could cause significant negative impact on the stable Old Irving Park neighborhood, within which the subject site is located. In addition, one of the four existing homes on the site is the 1958 UNCG Commencement House, located at 2207 North Elm Street. This home, constructed in the Modernist style, is exceptional in Greensboro for several reasons: it was the first of three homes designed by, constructed under supervision of, and decorated by, students of Womens' College (now UNCG), this student project was executed under the auspices of noted Greensboro architect Edward Lowenstein and artist Gregory Ivy; it was the subject of considerable acclaim in national media at the time of its completion. It should also be noted that since 2008 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year since its construction, this home is now eligible to be submitted for listing on the National Register of Historic Structures. While the submitted site plan proposes removal of all four existing homes, minor modifications could be made that would enable this historically significant home to be retained and incorporated into the proposed office development project through adaptive reuse techniques. This alternative is strongly recommended. Regardless of the ultimate fate of the home at 2207 North Elm Street, the applicant is strongly encouraged to discuss this proposal with representatives of the Old Irving Park Neighborhood.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PLANNING**

Staff recommends **denial** of the requested **CD-LO** (Conditional District-Limited Office) zoning district.



**Windsor Development Commercial Site – Traffic Impact Analysis**  
**Prepared for Windsor Development**  
**January 31, 2007**

**Executive Summary**

At the request of the Greensboro Department of Transportation, our firm John Davenport Engineering, Inc, has performed a traffic impact analysis for the proposed Windsor Development Commercial Site to be located off North Elm Street and West Cornwallis Drive in Greensboro, NC. The developers of this project propose to rezone the property to allow construction of two banks with four drive-thru lanes apiece. Based on the ITE trip generation manual, the proposed development is expected to generate approximately 3,290 daily weekday trips (40% pass-by); with 156 during the AM peak and 408 during the PM peak. The site plan indicates that the developer proposes one access point on North Elm Street and another access point on West Cornwallis Drive. This assessment summarizes the traffic impact analysis of the existing traffic conditions, as well as the projected traffic impact associated with this project. In consultation with Greensboro DOT, the scope was determined to be the following:

Analyze the following intersections:

- West Cornwallis Drive @ North Elm Street
- Access point @ West Cornwallis Drive
- Access point @ North Elm Street

These intersections were analyzed for existing conditions (where applicable), No-build conditions, and Full build-out conditions. The site is proposed to be built-out by 2008.

The following is a level of service table for the projected impact of this development.

<b>Table 5.2 - Level of Service Summary</b>						
<u>Intersection</u>	AM Peak			PM Peak		
	2007 Existing	2008 No-Build	2008 Build	2007 Existing	2008 No-Build	2008 Build
North Elm @ Site Access			F (68.2) EBL			F (601.3) EBL
Cornwallis Drive @ Site Access			B (12.2) SBL			C (16.2) SBL
Cornwallis Drive @ North Elm Street	E (59.8)	E (69.1)	E (70.7)	E (65.9)	E (67.5)	E (76.5)

The following are the recommendations for improvements made in this report:

#### Cornwallis Drive and North Elm Street

This intersection is constrained by development on all four corners, making it unlikely that geometric improvements could be implemented. Therefore it is recommended that the signal timing be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure optimal operation.

#### North Elm Street Access

This entrance is proposed to be located approximately 575 feet north of Cornwallis Drive. It is proposed to be full access. The level of service analysis indicates that the left turn traffic exiting the site will experience LOS F conditions during both peaks. This is primarily because of heavy traffic on North Elm Street. Additionally, the SimTraffic analysis indicates that traffic queues from Cornwallis may block this intersection during peak periods. Essentially, this intersection will operate as a right in/out during the heavy travel times of the day. However, during non peak periods, it should function much better.

Delays for the right turn traffic can be reduced by constructing the entrance wide enough to accommodate separate left and right turn lanes. North Elm Street should also be improved to allow for a northbound left turn lane into the site. Additionally, if possible, it is desirable that a separate right turn lane be constructed to allow traffic to enter the site (if right-of-way is available). This could allow southbound traffic entering the site to avoid the projected queues.

It should be noted that these conditions for left turn traffic from driveways along North Elm Street and Cornwallis are common during peak periods. Additionally, this site has a second access point on Cornwallis Drive which is expected to function better.

#### Cornwallis Drive Access

This access point is proposed to be located approximately 420 feet west of North Elm Street. It is also proposed to be full access. The level of service analysis indicates that left turns exiting this access point should experience delays in the LOS B/C range.

Separate left and right turn lanes for traffic exiting this site are also recommended for this access point. Additionally, Cornwallis Drive will need to be improved to allow for an eastbound left turn lane into the site.

General

Storage for all recommended auxiliary lanes should be 100 feet.

It is also desirable that this project be interconnected with the Maxwell Development, which is currently under construction. This connection (if possible) would enhance the mobility within this corner.

**6.0 Summary and Conclusion**

This analysis has been conducted based on the scope given by the Greensboro Department of Transportation Guidelines. We have identified all anticipated areas of deficiency and made recommendations for improvements. However, as stated before, there are significant limitations to making geometric improvements at the Cornwallis/North Elm Street intersection. This project as proposed represents a 2% increase in AM peak traffic and a 5% increase in PM peak traffic. Our analysis indicates that this increase should not result in a drop in overall level of service. Additionally, the proposed driveways can be expected to experience the same delays as the existing drives in the vicinity of this intersection. Finally, a significant portion of the trips expected to be generated by this development are expected to be pass-by trips, which are trips that are already on the roadways within the study area. Overall, while the development of this project and associated improvements will not enhance traffic conditions within the study area, its development is not expected to seriously degrade these conditions either.